

## Message Text

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ACTION NEA-06

INFO OCT-01 SS-14 ISO-00 NSC-05 NSCE-00 AF-04 SP-02 L-01

PM-03 INR-05 CIAE-00 DODE-00 MC-01 EB-03 /045 W

----- 021891

R 241300Z FEB 75

FM AMEMBASSY JIDDA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 0331

INFO AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA

AMCONSUL ASMARA

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM

AMEMBASSY MOGADISCIO

AMEMBASSY SANAA

C O N F I D E N T I A L JIDDA 1319

LIMDIS

E.O.: 11652C GDS

TAGS: PFOR, SA, ET, US

SUBJ: ETHIOPIA, SAUDI ARABIA AND THE UNITED STATES

SUMMARY: THE SAUDIS HAVE BECOME DISILLUSIONED WITH THE ETHIOPIAN REGIME BECAUSE OF ITS RADICALIZATION AND ITS DECISION TO SEEK A MILITARY SOLUTION IN ERITREA. IF WE RESPOND POSITIVELY TO ARMS REQUESTS FOR THE GOI WHILE FIGHTING IS GOING ON IN ERITREA IT WILL CAST A SHADOW ON OUR RELATIONS WITH THE SAG. WE CAN MANAGE THAT BUT HOPE THAT THE AID WILL BE GIVEN WITH AS LITTLE PUBLICITY AS POSSIBLE IN ORDER NOT TO GIVE STATES HOSTILE TO GOOD SAUDI-U.S. RELATIONS AN ISSUE THEY CAN EXPLOIT TO PUT A REAL STRAIN ON THOSE RELATIONS. END SUMMARY.

1. WE HAVE NOTED RECENT REPORTS THAT THE EITHOPIAN GOVERNMENT, FEELING THE ATTRITION IN ARMS AND AMMUNITION RESULTING FROM MILITARY OPERATIONS IN ERITREA, IS ASKING FOR ADDITIONAL U.S. ARMS ASSISTANCE. WHILE THIS DECISION WILL BE MADE PRIMARILY ON THE BASIS OF OUR INTERESTS IN  
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ETHIOPIA AND AFRICA, WE VOLUNTEER OUR EVALUATION OF THE

LIKELY SAUDI REACTION AS OF SOME RELEVANCE IN REACHING THIS DECISION.

2. AS THE DEPARTMENT IS AWARE, THE SAG HAS REGARDED THE EXISTANCE OF A MODERATE AND STABLE REGIME IN ETHIOPIA AS BEING IN ITS OWN INTEREST AND HAS SOUGHT OUR ADVICE ON HOW THIS MIGHT BE ENCOURAGED. BECAUSE IT HAS NOT WANTED TO CONTRIBUTE TO INSTABILITY, SAUDI ARABIA HAS UP TO NOW BEEN RESTRAINED IN ITS SUPPORT FOR THE MUSLIM INSURGENTS IN ERITREA WITH WHOM ITS SYMPATHIES LIE. IT HAS NOT SUPPORTED THEIR DEMANDS FOR TOTAL INDEPENDENCE WHICH WAS VIEWED AS A THREAT TO THE COHESIVENESS OF THE REST OF ETHIOPIA. THE SAG HAS ENCOURAGED A NEGOTIATED SETTLEMENT.

3. THE RADICALIZATION OF THE PMG IN RECENT MONTHS AND ITS APPARENT DECISION TO SEEK A MILITARY SOLUTION TO THE ERITREAN PROBLEM HAVE ALTERED THE SAUDI ATTITUDES. SAUDI SUPPORT FOR THE ELF HAS INCREASED AND MAY CONTINUE TO GROW. THE SAG PREFERENCE IS STILL FOR A NEGOTIATED SETTLEMENT WITHIN THE FRAMEWORK OF A UNITARY CONSERVATIVE OR MODERATE ETHIOPIA BUT IT BLAMES THE ETHIOPIAN GOVERNMENT, NOT THE ERITREAN INSURGENTS, FOR THE PRESENT DIM PROSPECTS FOR THIS OUTCOME. THE RECENT FIGHTING IN ERITREA HAS BEEN REPORTED QUITE EXTENSIVELY HERE. THE IMPRESSION BEING GIVEN IS THAT THE GOVERNMENT HAS BEEN UNRESTRAINED IN USE OF FORCE, EVEN AGAINST CIVILIANS.

4. IN OUR QUITE EXTENSIVE CONSULTATIONS WITH SAG ON ETHIOPIAN DEVELOPMENTS OVER THE PAST FEW MONTHS WE HAVE EXPLAINED OUR POLICY OF CONTINUING ECONOMIC AND MILITARY ASSISTANCE AS A MEANS OF ENCOURAGING MODERATION. SAG OFFICIALS HAVE UNDERSTOOD THE AIMS OF THIS POLICY THROUGH THEY HAVE BEEN UNIMPRESSED WITH THE RESULTS. WE HAVE NOT RECENTLY DISCUSSED ARMS ASSISTANCE TO ETHIOPIA WITH THE SAG. WE HAVE NO DOUBT, HOWEVER, THAT IT WOULD TAKE A NEGATIVE POSITION BECAUSE IN ITS (POSSIBLY UNINFORMED) VIEW ADDITIONAL ARMS ASSISTANCE WILL ONLY ENCOURAGE THE GOE TO CONTINUE TRYING FOR A MILITARY SOLUTION IT CANNOT ATTAIN, MANY GOOD MUSLIMS WILL BE KILLED IN THE PROCESS, AND THE RESULTANT BITTERNESS WILL MAKE AN ULTIMATE STABLE

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SOLUTION EVEN MORE DIFFICULT TO ACHIEVE. WHILE WE BELIEVE THAT SAUDI OFFICIALS WOULD BE GENUINELY DISTRESSED BY USG ACTION APPEARING TO HELP THE ETHIOPIAN ARMY FIGHT IN ERITREA THEY ARE LIKELY TO BE EVEN MORE CONCERNED AT OUR BEING ON OPPOSITE SIDES OF AN ISSUE WHICH HAS THE POTENTIAL TO BECOME A MAJOR EMOTIONAL AND POLITICAL ISSUE IN THE ARAB AND ISLAMIC WORLD. THE SAUDIS DON'T LIKE HAVING EVEN A SMALL WEDGE BETWEEN US WHICH OTHERS SUCH AS IRAQ

WHO DON'T LIKE CLOSE SAUDI-U.S. RELATIONS CAN MANIPULATE  
TO PUT A REAL STRAIN ON OUR RELATIONS.

5. IN SUM, IF WE DECIDE TO PROVIDE ARMS ASSISTANCE TO THE  
GOE AT THE PRESENT IME IT WILL CAUSE SOME, BUT MANAGEABLE,  
STRAIN ON OUR RELATIONS. THIS CAN BE MINIMIZED BY AVOIDING  
PUBLICITY (THOUGH SOME IS INEVITABLE) AND TO THE EXTENT  
POSSIBLE PRESENTING THE AID AS PART OF OUR CONTINUING DEF-  
ENSE RELATIONSHIP WITH THE GOE AND UNRELATED TO THE WAR IN  
ERITREA.

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## Message Attributes

**Automatic Decaptioning:** Z  
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**Channel Indicators:** n/a  
**Current Classification:** UNCLASSIFIED  
**Concepts:** FOREIGN RELATIONS, MILITARY ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS, MILITARY SALES  
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**Copy:** SINGLE  
**Draft Date:** 24 FEB 1975  
**Decaption Date:** 28 MAY 2004  
**Decaption Note:** 25 YEAR REVIEW  
**Disposition Action:** RELEASED  
**Disposition Approved on Date:**  
**Disposition Authority:** KelleyW0  
**Disposition Case Number:** n/a  
**Disposition Comment:** 25 YEAR REVIEW  
**Disposition Date:** 28 MAY 2004  
**Disposition Event:**  
**Disposition History:** n/a  
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**Reference:** n/a  
**Review Action:** RELEASED, APPROVED  
**Review Authority:** KelleyW0  
**Review Comment:** n/a  
**Review Content Flags:**  
**Review Date:** 05 AUG 2003  
**Review Event:**  
**Review Exemptions:** n/a  
**Review History:** RELEASED <05 AUG 2003 by ElyME>; APPROVED <10 DEC 2003 by KelleyW0>  
**Review Markings:**

Margaret P. Grafeld  
Declassified/Released  
US Department of State  
EO Systematic Review  
05 JUL 2006

**Review Media Identifier:**  
**Review Referrals:** n/a  
**Review Release Date:** n/a  
**Review Release Event:** n/a  
**Review Transfer Date:**  
**Review Withdrawn Fields:** n/a  
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**Status:** NATIVE  
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**TAGS:** PFOR, SA, ET, US  
**To:** STATE  
**Type:** TE  
**Markings:** Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 05 JUL 2006